

2005–2007 Coral Management Fellowship U.S. Virgin Islands Statement of Work

Location of the Project

The host agency for the 2005–2007 U.S. Virgin Islands Coral Management Fellowship is the Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Program (VICZMP), located within the Department of Planning and Natural Resources. The fellow will be located in the VICZMP St. Croix office.

The U.S. Virgin Islands are located about 1,400 miles south-southeast of Florida. St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas are the three largest islands with many offshore cays surrounding them. The topography of St. Thomas and St. John primarily consists of steep mountains, which form lush, vegetated valleys that slope gently to the shoreline. Cobblestones line some shorelines while white sandy beaches or mangrove forests line others. The warm constant water temperature and remarkable clarity provide ideal conditions for coral reef growth. The coral reefs include shallow fringing reefs that parallel the coastlines and scattered patch reefs. The Virgin Islands' climate is temperate, with temperatures ranging from approximately 78 °F to 94 °F.



Program/Agency Background

The Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Act was passed by the U.S. Virgin Islands Legislature in 1978, as a means of regulating development and managing coastal resources in the territory. Several of the VICZMP goals that are set forth in the Virgin Island Coastal Zone Management Act, Section 903 (b), relate to the protection of coral reefs. In particular, the VICZMP is charged with conserving ecologically significant resource areas for their contribution to marine productivity and valuable wildlife habitats, and preserving the function and integrity of reefs, marine meadows, salt ponds, mangroves, and other significant natural areas.

The Virgin Islands' coral reef ecosystems are under heavy pressures. Hurricanes and other major storms, higher than normal wave and water temperatures, and diseases that have affected the coral reefs and their inhabitants have combined with destructive boat anchoring practices, boat groundings and cargo spills, careless land usage, improper dredging practices, and overfishing to cause dramatic deterioration of the Virgin Islands'

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coral reefs. Within the last 15 to 20 years, the amount of live coral has declined dramatically, while the abundance of algal life forms has increased proportionately.

The governor of the Virgin Islands signed into law Act 6572 in January 2003, thus establishing the St. Croix East End Marine Park (EEMP). In accordance with the Coral Reef Task Force Action Plan, the establishment of the EEMP followed a collaborative process that involved federal and local resource managers, scientists, nongovernmental organizations, stakeholders, academia, and others. The EEMP encompasses approximately 155-square-kilometers (60-square-miles) of territorial waters and has a shoreline area of about 17 miles. It contains significant marine resources that include an extensive barrier reef, a complex mosaic of fringing reefs along most of the shoreline, sea grass beds, mangrove communities, and other associated habitats. Recognizing the value of the marine resources, and the challenges facing the marine ecosystems, the Virgin Islands Government established the EEMP to protect and maintain the biological diversity and other natural values of the area for the long term, promote sound management practices for sustainable production purposes, and protect the natural resource base from being targeted for other land use purposes that would negatively impact the area's biological diversity.

One of the most important strategies that will benefit the long-term sustainability of the EEMP is the implementation of an education and outreach program. VICZMP has begun development of an education and outreach program, as well as the first video that will be used as a general education and outreach tool by the EEMP. The education and outreach program will not only entail dissemination of the video being produced, but will also develop a variety of outreach goals, the opportunities available to reach those goals, and a plan for the development of future media products.

Another program that would benefit greatly from an education and outreach program is the Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Program (NPS Program). This program works within the VICZMP to improve the quality of the waters surrounding the islands and cays of the Virgin Islands.

Nonpoint source pollution occurs when water flows across land and picks up and carries pollutants to nearby water bodies. Trash, pesticides, sewage from broken pipes or failing septic systems, petroleum products, or any other material that can be transported by flowing water can be considered a nonpoint source pollutant. Nonpoint source pollution is gradually reducing the quality of life in the Virgin Islands by destroying natural resources. The primary goal of the NPS Program is to reduce and reverse these impacts.

Project Goals and Objectives

The goal of this fellowship project is to develop and implement education and outreach programs for the EEMP and for the NPS Program. These overlapping education and outreach programs will accomplish the following:

- Create environmental education opportunities for the general population of the Virgin Islands, as well as EEMP users

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- Demonstrate how the EEMP is integrated into a system of supporting and sustaining habitats
- Promote awareness of and stewardship for the EEMP throughout the Virgin Islands, and specifically in St. Croix
- Promote awareness and build support for the NPS Program

Project Description

Below is a description of the overall project, with general milestones and outcomes. The fellow will be integrated into the VICZMP and will network with partner organizations and other agencies to complete this multifaceted project. The fellow will be involved in each of these tasks, and how he or she chooses to develop the education and outreach plans will depend on the skills and abilities brought to the project. Note that some of these tasks will be accomplished concurrently.

Orientation (3 months)

The fellow will be introduced to the staff and management of the VICZMP and partner agencies. The fellow will review background information regarding the Virgin Islands' NPS Program, coral reef initiative, and other coastal management issues. The fellow will participate with program staff members in field visits, interagency meetings, and outreach activities. After participating in these activities, the fellow, with input from the mentor, will review the project work plan that will be revised after the first year of the fellowship.

Outcomes:

- Familiarity with staff, operations, and resources of state coastal program
- Integration into the VICZMP and clarification of role in project
- Continued assessment of education and outreach needs
- Implementation of a project work plan

Research existing education and outreach efforts and identify gaps (6 months)

The fellow will continue to research and evaluate existing education and outreach materials and documents at the VICZMP, as well as among project partners. This process will include interacting with education and outreach staff members within the Division of Fish and Wildlife, the Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service, and the University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service. These organizations have active education and outreach components and would be a good source of information.

Based on interactions, document reviews, and material reviews, the fellow will continue to identify gaps in the existing education and outreach efforts related to the EEMP and the NPS Program. The fellow will prepare a draft document that outlines findings and make recommendations about what types of materials need to be developed and how to effectively distribute them.

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Outcomes:

- Begin product development for education and outreach program
- Assist in drafting relevant sections of grant proposals that will be funded during later stages of project
- Continue as Co-Facilitator and Secretary of the Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators (VINE)

Develop and distribute education and outreach materials (1 year)

Working with input from the VICZMP staff and various project partners such as the Division of Fish and Wildlife, the Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service, and the UVI-Cooperative Extension Service, the fellow will develop the appropriate materials and messages for the general public and other audiences about the St. Croix East End Marine Park and the NPS Program. The fellow will be responsible for unifying the education and outreach efforts for these two programs into a cohesive, comprehensive education and outreach program.

Education and outreach materials might include print material, audio-visual material, and public service announcements. In some cases, the fellow will create materials using software provided by the VICZMP, and in other cases an outside contractor will be hired to create materials. Distribution methods might include school events, special events, public forums, meetings, and the media. Some potential outreach projects that the fellow may be working on include the following:

- Developing and distributing environmental education materials from the Christiansted Harbor Boardwalk, a site that will allow for the dissemination of the materials to a wide audience
- Developing a mobile kiosk that can be used to distribute environmental education materials at the Rohlsen Airport and other sites
- Developing, in coordination with project partners, a mobile environmental and outreach program (van)

Outcomes:

- Develop appropriate materials and messages for the public related to the EEMP and the NPS Program
- Distribute information by attending various events and interacting with the public
- Assist in developing and hosting various events to distribute information
- Review and evaluate and determine existing outreach and education efforts and outline a plan that will address them in preparation for next grant cycle

Evaluate education and outreach efforts (3 months)

Update work plan with any further recommendations based on the results of developing and distributing education and outreach materials for a year. The updated work plan will detail project partners, materials developed, distribution methods, target audiences and messages, contractor contact information, and software used to create materials.

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Outcomes

- Circulate work plan internally
- Create summary of feedback and recommended modifications
- Prepare final work plan based on feedback
- Ensure all projects to develop materials are either completed or turned over to other VICZMP staff members in a smooth fashion

Eligibility Requirements

- Bachelor's degree in a natural or environmental science or related area of study with 4 to 6 years experience in education and outreach OR a master's degree in a related area of study with 2 years experience in education and outreach
- Valid driver's license

Desired Background and Skill Sets

- Demonstrated oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills
- A proven ability to be well organized and able to manage and prioritize multiple tasks
- Experience, through an internship, fellowship, or part-time job, in environmental science or natural resource management
- Proficient in Spanish
- Public speaking, events planning, and meeting facilitation experience
- Ability to work independently
- Creative, flexible, adaptable
- Experience living and working in another culture or in an island community
- Experience working with different user groups
- Experience with Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Illustrator, or similar graphic design software